

Applicant's bearing apparatus is directed to supporting window in a laser enclosure such that the window can be rotated. The window rotation allows different portion of the widow to be exposed to a laser beam exciting the widow for prolonging the useful life of the widow.

Levatter also discloses a rotatable widow for a laser enclosure. The Examiner gives as a reason for rejection that Levatter discloses a bearing shaft in a cylindrical bearing sleeve with an O-ring being used to rotatably and removably retain the bearing shaft in the bearing sleeve. The Examiner states that an O-ring and a coil spring are equivalent, and clearly implies that substituting a coil spring in the apparatus of Levatter would yield Applicant's claimed invention. It is respectfully submitted that the Examiner is incorrect.

First, it is respectfully submitted that an O-ring and a coil spring are not equivalent. An O-ring is made of a solid elastomer material and is usually used as a seal. A coil spring is hollow coiled device made of metal, has no appreciable sealing properties, but is typically more deformable than an O-ring.

Beyond the use of a coil spring, there is even a more significant difference between the Levatter device and Applicant's claimed invention. More specifically, Levatter's window (see FIGS 5 and 6) is supported on a bearing shaft within a bearing sleeve. The bearing shaft includes two circumferential grooves. However, Levatter's bearing sleeve does not have any circumferential grooves. In Levatter, an O-ring seal is located in each of the circumferential grooves in the bearing shaft. Substituting a coil spring for an O-ring in the bearing of Levatter would not yield Applicant's invention, as the bearing would lack the mating (aligned) groove in the bearing shaft that is an important feature of Applicant's invention.

In Applicant's bearing, it is these mating grooves and the coil spring located in both grooves that enables the bearing shaft to be rotatably retained in the bearing sleeve. In the bearing of Levatter, it is clearly not the O-ring that retains the bearing shaft in the bearing sleeve. In the bearing of Levatter, the shaft is retained in the bearing sleeve by a flange (118 in FIG. 5) on the bearing shaft and a window holder (114 in FIGS 5 and 6) attached to the bearing sleeve. The window holder and flange are located at opposite ends of the bearing shaft and each has a diameter greater than the diameter of the bearing sleeve. The O-ring in the window of Levatter is clearly not intended to have any retentive function. Levatter states only (column 9, lines 15 and 16) that the Viton rings (O-rings) allow rotation of the bearing while providing sealing.

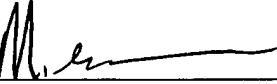
Each of the pending independent claims require that the bearing shaft include a circumferential groove and also require that the coil spring be carried by both of the grooves. Levatter completely fails to teach or suggest this concept.

In view of the above-presented arguments, it is respectfully submitted that Applicant's claimed invention is patentable over Levatter. Accordingly it is requested that the rejection of claims under 35 U.S.C 103(a) be withdrawn.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: February 2 , 2004

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